

Handy Screenwriting Terms

ANGLE ON – Emphasizes the subject in a shot, whether a person, place or thing, e.g. ANGLE ON Jane getting out of her car.

ANOTHER ANGLE – A variation on a shot, e.g. ANOTHER ANGLE of Jane getting out of her car.

CLOSE SHOT – Used for emphasis, e.g. A CLOSE SHOT of Jane as she stares at the bartender.

DISSOLVE – Two images overlapping; one fades out as the other fades in. Can be used to indicate the end of a scene.

FADE OUT – Fade to black. Can be used to indicate the end of a scene.

FAVOURING - Emphasizes the character or action, e.g. FAVOURING Jane as she gets out of her car.

FLASHBACK – An scene from the past that interrupts the action to explain a character's motivation or action in the current scene. Written above the slug line as BEGIN FLASHBACK, then on completion of the scene END FLASHBACK.

INSERT – A close shot of an object, such as a book, photo, clock, or gun.

MOVING SHOT – Focuses on the movement of a shot, e.g. A MOVING SHOT of the car racing down the street. Jane picks up her keys. The barman escorts Jane out of the bar.

NEW ANGLE – Another variation on a shot, e.g. A NEW ANGLE of Jane ordering a drink at a bar.

OVER-THE-SHOULDER – Often used for POV and REVERSE shots. The camera looks over a character's shoulder from just behind, so the viewer sees action from their point of view, including part of their shoulder or head in the foreground.

POV – A shot showing audience what a person sees from their point of view, e.g. ANGLE ON Jane ordering a drink at a bar, and from Jane's POV the barman is sweating nervously.

REVERSE ANGLE – A shift in perspective, often the reverse of a POV shot, e.g. the barman's POV as he looks at Jane and a REVERSE ANGLE of Jane looking back at the barman, showing what she sees.

SCENE – Make up of either a single shot or series of shots.

SERIES OF SHOTS –

SHOT – What the camera sees.

SLUG LINE – Also called Scene Heading'. Describes the general or specific locale. Written in capital letters, stating EXT. if outside or INT. if indoors, followed by the place, then time of day as DAY or NIGHT, e.g. EXT. LONDON BRIDGE—NIGHT.

WIDER ANGLE – Describes a change of focus in a scene, e.g. going from ANGLE ON Jane to a WIDER ANGLE that includes Jane and her wider surroundings.

Example layout

EXT. SMALL HARBOUR-DAY.

A few seagulls circle and foamy waves crash against the shore. Dark clouds gather as a storm threatens. In the distance, a fishing boat is making its way towards the harbour.

MOVING

A fishing boat picks up speed as waves spray over the deck.

INT. BOAT-FAVOURING JIM JOHNSON.

Jim steers vigorously. PETE stands next to him peering through binoculars, an old fisherman in his seventies.

PETE

(shouting)

How long have we got?

JIM

About a quarter hour. You okay?

He grins.

PETE

I will be.

Suddenly the engine SPLUTTERS and cuts out. They glance at one-another, worried.

DISSOLVE TO:

Jane Young 23/8/2016 15:13

Comment [1]: Slug line - briefly describes the location and time of day: a small harbour during the day. Written in capital letters.

Jane Young 23/8/2016 15:08

Comment [2]: Then skip a line

Jane Young 23/8/2016 15:13

Comment [3]: Action - narrative description of the events of a scene, i.e. what we see. Single spaced, margin to margin.

Jane Young 23/8/2016 15:15

Comment [4]: Skip a line (double space)

Jane Young 23/8/2016 15:16

Comment [5]: Suggestion for a change in camera focus.

Jane Young 23/8/2016 15:20

Comment [6]: Another double space

Jane Young 23/8/2016 15:21

Comment [7]: Change from outside the boat to inside. We are focusing on the subject of the shot, Jim Johnson

Jane Young 23/8/2016 15:23

Comment [8]: New characters introduced should always be in capital letters.

Jane Young 23/8/2016 15:22

Comment [9]: The name of the character speaking should always be in capital letters and centred on the page

Jane Young 23/8/2016 15:24

Comment [10]: Use parenthesis to describe stage directions - a physical or emotional action - i.e. how the character is speaking the dialogue. Single-spaced.

Jane Young 23/8/2016 15:24

Comment [11]: Stage directions include characters' reactions, silent or otherwise

Jane Young 23/8/2016 15:26

Comment [12]: Sound effects or music effects are capitalised.

Jane Young 23/8/2016 15:27

Comment [13]: To indicate the end of a scene you can use CUT TO, DISSOLVE TO, or FADE OUT